

whether it is fentanyl issues, whether it is our military, or whether it is our education programs.

Normally, when the Secretary of the Treasury gives that type of announcement, responsible leadership in Congress takes up the task of extending the debt ceiling so that our government can continue to function. We are talking about paying the bills for existing budgets that have already been passed. That is what the debt ceiling empowers by Congress moving forward.

It has been 18 days since Ms. Yellen's warning to the country and to the world, and the leadership of the House has done absolutely nothing. We have passed a series of pointless resolutions that have no legal impact in terms of real lives of people in this country and a bunch of bills that we know are immediately dead on arrival in the Senate.

Again, as the clock ticks, the world wants to know: What is the Speaker's position? What does he want in terms of doing what every Speaker, Republican and Democrat, has done over and over again to protect the full faith and credit of our currency and the paper that the Treasury sells, again, as basically the gold standard in terms of financial markets across the world?

Mr. MCCARTHY has not told us.

What is at work here? If we look at the Republican Study Group, which consists of roughly 170 Members, they have been talking openly and publicly about the fact that they want to do entitlement reform, which is to go after Social Security and Medicare.

Madam Speaker, I would just say that this is a very off-target proposal and solution because, in fact, Social Security has no bearing in terms of the operating deficit of the Federal Government, which, again, the Speaker claims that he cares so much about.

Social Security is funded through a separate revenue stream, the payroll tax that comes out of working people's paychecks every single pay period that goes into a fund that, again, is separate and distinct from the operating budget of the Federal Government.

The proposals of the Republican Study Group, which are to raise the retirement age from 67 to 70 and to impose a degraded level of CPI cost-of-living adjustment, a changed CPI, would hit middle-class Americans hard, particularly younger ones because this is definitely proposed as sort of a two-tiered Social Security system.

There is a fundamental flaw in the whole approach that is being suggested and discussed by the Republican Study Group, which is the claim that the Medicare and Social Security systems are entitlements.

Entitlement is not a legal term. It is not a budget term. It is a political term. It is an attempt to try to mask the fact that Social Security, since Franklin Roosevelt signed it into law 80 years ago, is a social insurance program.

If you don't believe me, look at your paycheck. What your paycheck shows

is that the withholding for Social Security is separate from your Federal taxes, which go into the operating budget of this country, and is designated as the Federal Insurance Contributions Act, FICA, for old-age insurance.

Again, it is an insurance program, and it provides coverage for people who are retired because they have hit retirement age, for young people who have lost a parent, or for people on disability.

If we were responsible about trying to deal with the fact that Social Security is going to be challenged in 2033—it is going to have a shortfall; it is not going to go bankrupt, which the press sometimes says—there is a solution to that, which is to lift the earnings cap. Today, basically anyone who earns income above \$160,000 suddenly doesn't have to pay into the Social Security system.

As Warren Buffett, a billionaire, aptly pointed out, he is paying less into Social Security than his secretary. It is called the Buffett rule. The solution, which basically says everybody pays the same rate, or at least people whose income is above \$400,000, would overnight push back the solvency for decades to ensure that young people, in particular, are going to have Social Security just like all the Americans in the preceding 80 years have had. That is really one of the pillars of middle-class economic security.

In the meantime, the clock is ticking. We know that we are really not just going to go at the debt ceiling, but we are going to hit full default by June 1.

This leadership has to do the right thing, just like we have done in past Presidencies and past Congresses: Extend the debt ceiling.

FUNDING UKRAINE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Florida (Mr. GAETZ) for 5 minutes.

Mr. GAETZ. Madam Speaker, how much more for Ukraine? Is there any limit? Which billionth dollar really kicks in the door? Which redline that we set will we not later cross?

China reminds us that we have real issues. China began its offensive against our homeland by infiltrating our universities, stealing our innovations, buying off our politicians, and surveilling our citizens, all the while capturing the loyalty of America's most powerful corporations. China's influence is overtaking ours, even in our own hemisphere.

Our conflict with China may turn very hot very soon. Many believe we are currently in the window of a possible invasion of Taiwan. If not deterred, such an invasion would immediately make life worse for virtually every American.

Tomorrow, President Biden will tell us how much more we must do for Ukraine. Look around your house. How

much stuff is made in Ukraine or even Russia, for that matter? Next, do China. If you are watching this speech on a smartphone, you are likely using Taiwanese technology.

So why Ukraine, a country that just rounded up dozens of senior leaders in its government over overt corruption? Perhaps the answer is as simple as the Hunter Biden life motto: a grifter's gotta grift.

The amount of money we now pour into Ukraine makes Burisma's wildest dreams of wealth through Biden family influence seem meek by comparison.

Defense contractors need there to be a war going on somewhere, whether the arms end up in the hands of ISIS, the Taliban, the Azov battalion, or on the black market. They get rich in the business of weapons supply, but only when there is weapons demand.

A serious nation would never let foreign interests abroad or special interests here at home dictate its foreign policy. The interests of our countrymen must morally compel our greater attention. As the war slogs on in Ukraine, the benefits to Americans are unclear.

Bandits in the Sinaloa mountains hurt more Americans than the men in Crimea, but foreigners come to Washington to lecture us about spending our constituents' money on a conflict thousands of miles away, and my colleagues are eager to oblige.

On this floor, Zelenskyy's demands got bipartisan standing ovations—from most. Stingers, HIMARS, tanks, at first, we said no to all of these things. President Biden even said that some of these things might lead to world war III, yet we sent all of them.

F-16s are likely still. Lockheed Martin sure is confident that Ukraine will get F-16s. They told the Financial Times recently that they are already ramping up production. Create the demand; provide the supply.

This is escalating. We are placing trust in leaders who do not deserve trust.

John Kirby, the Pentagon spokesman who assured us the Afghan military would withstand the Taliban offensive, now says that there is no risk that Putin will go nuclear.

The risk of miscalculation in Ukraine is much, much higher than getting it wrong in Afghanistan. A nuclear war between Russia and the United States would end human life as we know it.

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Yet, President Biden is doing everything possible to provoke such a disaster.

And for what?

The actions we are taking are not going to end the war in Ukraine. In fact, we are probably prolonging the killing. Tens of thousands of Ukrainians and Russians will die this year because Congress feels good when it sends instruments of death and billions in cash.

Many dollars meant for the war in Afghanistan ended up in bank accounts in Switzerland and Dubai.

To where will we trace the bounty of the Ukrainian grift?

This war could end tomorrow if we pursue negotiation, but Biden refuses. Not only do we arm the Ukrainian military, we pay their politicians' salaries. The \$113 billion in aid included funding of the Ukrainian Government.

We can and must push for peace. You don't really hear that from many people these days with the exception of President Trump. Trump is right to recognize that we are on the brink of world war III and that immediate action for peace is necessary to stop disaster.

Unfortunately, there is a bipartisan coalition working to continue the war. When Elon Musk proposed a peace plan, Nikki Haley attacked him saying that we "shouldn't push our weight on them."

This is, of course, nonsense. We have pushed billions of dollars on them. We can simultaneously pressure North Korea and China from supplying Russia, and we ought to do so.

WALL STREET-BEIJING AXIS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California (Mr. SHERMAN) for 5 minutes.

Mr. SHERMAN. Madam Speaker, the Chinese Communist Party obviously believes that they can invade America's airspace deliberately, notoriously, and without serious consequences. They even believe—and this shows their hubris and their gall—that they can announce that they reserve the right to retaliate against America for shooting down their spy balloon.

Do you know what, Madam Speaker?

After 26 years in this House, I would say that the Chinese Communist Party is probably right. They did it. They hit us, and they can probably get away with it because the two parties will compete about who can scream the greatest invective toward Beijing, and then the two parties will attack each other saying: Well, what did President Trump do? And what did President Biden do?

In the end, we will have nothing but bruised, partisan vocal cords.

I have seen for 26 years the Beijing-Wall Street axis control our policy toward China.

Now this is just a balloon, but it is on top of two enormous problems with China. One is the lopsided trade relationship where they prohibit us from exporting to them and impose higher tariffs on us than we impose on them.

The second was the obfuscation and lack of cooperation of China when COVID arose on their territory.

But we probably will not have meaningful retaliation for those great harms and the most recent one because Wall Street has been in control of this House since the day in the year 2000

when we granted most-favored-nation status to Beijing and let them into the World Trade Organization. Before that, China was an annoyance and a slumbering giant. Since then, the Chinese Communist Party has done untold damage to our people, to their people, and, of course, to our economy and national security.

There are two things Wall Street will not let us do and two things China would actually try to avoid, and that is dealing with Taiwan and trade.

So I have three proposals. I will look forward to working with anyone on either side of the aisle to turn this into good legislation.

First, Congress should provide that we automatically allow Taiwan to buy certain defense items and that we act expeditiously at the congressional level without waiting for the administration to allow the Seahawk helicopters and other necessary defense items to go to Taiwan.

Second—and this arises from my years as chairman of the Investor Protection, Entrepreneurship, and Capital Markets Subcommittee—we need to require all major corporations to disclose, as a risk factor to their investors, how they would be affected by an end of the U.S.-China economic relationship or major impediment to it.

Investors deserve the information, and we need corporations to compete for capital by showing that they have made themselves more resilient. If our companies are more resilient, then our economy is more resilient.

Third, we need to provide that we immediately end most-favored-nation status to China if they blockade or invade Taiwan. This has to be immediate, certain, and known in Beijing before they launch their invasion, and it is not immediate and it is certain unless we provide no executive branch waiver.

Finally, a fourth proposal, and that is we need to provide an immediate 20 percent tariff on all Chinese goods if they retaliate against us for implementing any of those first three proposals. If they retaliate against that retaliation, then we have to be ready to go beyond that.

We can act. We can act with regard to Taiwan, we can act with regard to trade, and we can act with regard to a country that has built the most lopsided trading relationship in the history of international trade and whose actions have turned the industrial Midwest into what we now refer to as the Rust Belt which has led to a decline in real wages for those without a college education for over 25 years leading to fentanyl and a host of other problems.

So we can act.

The question is: Can we overcome the Wall Street-Beijing axis?

Can we deal with the partisanship here, or will this balloon just go over our heads and lead, once again, to partisan vituperation?

HONORING MICHAEL WEINSTOCK

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New York (Mr. SANTOS) for 5 minutes.

Mr. SANTOS. Madam Speaker, today, I rise to honor a former volunteer firefighter who was at Ground Zero on 9/11, Michael Weinstock. He was an assistant district attorney in Brooklyn's special victim's bureau and a volunteer firefighter and EMT.

On the morning of 9/11, Michael witnessed the black smoke billowing out of the World Trade Center. Without thought, he voluntarily rode with first responders to help in any way he could. Michael had been unloading medical equipment out of an ambulance when the South Tower crumbled and nearly crushed Michael to death.

Today, Michael suffers from a painful and incurable disease: neuropathy.

Michael has been a strong advocate for neuropathy to be covered by the World Trade Center Health Program. Neuropathy is a medical condition that results in damage to the nerves outside the brain and spinal cord. Those who suffer from neuropathy experience weakness and numbness which typically occurs in the hands or feet. This can be incredibly painful and debilitating, and many are unable to live normal lives. This is also known as the suicide disease due to limited effective treatments and the fact that there is no cure.

Studies from the International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health have linked neuropathy with the 9/11 dust. The data from the 2019 study found that nearly 10,000 firefighters and emergency medical workers were exposed to toxins at the World Trade Center.

The World Trade Center Health Program covered conditions categories include: acute and traumatic injuries, airway and digestive disorders, cancers, and mental health conditions, to name a few.

In 2016, the World Trade Center Health Program was petitioned to add peripheral neuropathy to its list of covered conditions, which it declined to do. In 2017, an FDNY responder again petitioned the program to add peripheral neuropathy to its covered conditions list. Unfortunately, the World Trade Center Health Program declined to update its list a second time citing insufficient evidence.

Michael's story is one of many that have yet to be told to a wider audience. This issue goes beyond the political pale of Republican versus Democrat. As a Member of the 118th Congress, I will use this opportunity to raise awareness of what the men and women who suffer from this debilitating disease are going through due to the exposure of the toxins from the World Trade Center.

Since the World Trade Center Health Program does not cover neuropathy, people like Michael must pay out of pocket for treatment, medication, and other medical needs.